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The Right of Freedom

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Sad "Anniversary"

The post-referendum discrimination of the Belarusan language is 3 years.

Belarus has a "mystery", which is hardly to be unravelled by foreign visitors of our country. Perhaps, the closest definition of its essence was given by Mrs. Ingrida Laurentze, Latvian ambassador to Belarus. When been asked about what she found most striking during her first days in our state, her answer was "the fact, that the Belarusan language is almost unheard on the streets of the capital city…"

Any "civilised" "European" would question himself at once: "Why is it like that?" In order to answer this question, we could have lectured now on how Russian Empire has been strangling and proscribing the Belarusan language ever since the beginning of the 18th century. We could have recollected Bolsheviks, who obliterated the national brain-power, and Khrustchjov, who said once on the stairs of Belarusan State University, "The sooner the Belarusans reject their language, the sooner they reach Communism."

It is known that Khrustchjov promised to have build Communism by 1980, and Belarusan members of the Party, led by Masherau, rushed to execute the chief's "instructions". The last Belarusan schools in Minsk were closed exactly in the beginning of the 1970s… We could have commented in detail on abolishment of the Belarusan language, which was gradually carried out over centuries. But what for? It must have no sense now, since the 1991 Independence seems not only to have crossed all the attempts of assimilators, but also to have given the Belarusan people a chance to restore in full blood its language and culture. It was like that. Till May 1995, till the well-known referendum, after which in Belarus the Russian language acquired the equal status with the Belarusan language. Practically it meant that the Belarusan language passed from the state tongue into a minor one. What else could those "equal rights" mean under the circumstances of the Russian language's expansion, of its entire prevailing in all spheres of life… Furthermore, the Belarus authorities (and President first and foremost, who not only does not speak Belarusan, but also takes every opportunity to degrade his mother tongue (!) and uses Belarusan words only to abuse the language) adopted the attitude of all kinds of "patronage" towards the Russian language, as if it had been offended during the times of "the forcible Belarusification".

That is how it happened, that in 1997 in Minsk there were only 7 per cent of first-graders, who were taught in Belarusan, in comparison with 70 per cent in 1995… The Belarusan language has almost completely left the official (business) sphere (and even Ministry of Culture issues its documents in Russian). Belarusan-language names of companies and stores are being replaced with those ones written in Russian. Belarusan-language newspapers turn (for the sake of justice, of course: we have two state tongues) to bilingual, bilingual newspapers turn to entirely Russian-language ones. (But none of Russian-language newspapers has become even bilingual.) The Belarusan language has been attacked from all possible directions. But in the first place, Belarusan-language kindergartens and schools are being closed. There is hardly any Belarusan-language institution of higher

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Chronicle

On 12 March, Slonim Town Executive Committee and Region Executive Committee refused to accredit a non-governmental newspaper "Gazeta Slonimskaya" [The Newspaper of Slonim] due to the fact that 'the working order of Town Executive Committee provides that representatives only of the newspaper "Slonimsky Vestnik" [Slonim's Messenger], the executive committee being one of its founders, can be present at its sittings.'

In May, 15-year-old Zmitzer Vas'kovich, who was detained on April 2, 1998 during the action of protest against Russia's annexation of Belarus, was released on a written undertaking not to leave a place after spending several days without food in the receiving prison for children and the militia point. Because of that experience and hunger, he fell ill and was hospitalised with the diagnosis "stomach ulcer".

On 1 May, several members of Social-Democratic Party were arrested, among them its President M.Statkevich, President of "Maladaya Gramada" C.Martsaleu, A.Stankevich, A.Zavadsky, M.Kolas, and C.Pjaljosa. During the arrest, A.Zavadsky was being severely beaten and strangulated, and he had to address the Prosecutor's Office with a claim.

On 1 May, people in civil apprehended press-photographers Siarhey Gryts (Associated Press) and Vasil' Fjadosenka (Reuter) during making a survey of May events in Minsk. After several hours at the Militia Station, they were mugged and set free.

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Alyaksey Shydlousky:
Two Months at the "Valadarka"

The 19-year-old "Youth Front" member Alyaksey Shydlousky, sentenced in February to a year and a half in a high-security colony, is still being kept in Minsk Investigative Ward. Right after the sentence was pronounced in Minsk City Court, Alyaksey was moved to another cell (from the cell for people under investigation into a one for convicted people, characterised by more severe conditions).

On May 12, Shydlousky's mother and wife managed to pass him a parcel and visit him. According to mother Raisa Ivanovna, Alyaksey and his co-prisoners' rights to watch TV and read newspapers are rather restricted. Very seldom they get pro-presidential mass media, not to mention independent issues, which never appear in the prison. As far as TV is concerned, the first question of the political prisoner was "What was the score at the hockey match?" The mother was confused, as she did know the match's results...

Raisa Ivanovna said, that her son's morals were normal, Alyaksey kept a stiff upper lip. The state of health was more or less satisfactory that day, too, considering the conditions in the "Valadarka". Alyaksey's life means waiting now. This waiting could be expressed by one word: deportation. Some of these days the young man will be sent to the colony, where, as prisoners say, there is a bit more fresh air (not so much in a figurative meaning as in the general, physical sense). Besides it would be a change in the monotonous prison life. Alyaksey asked his relatives to subscribe him to some periodicals. It is unclear where the political prisoner is to be transferred to. But there is information that he will stay in Minsk, moved to the high-security colony on Kal'varyiskaja St.

Alyaksey kept poetising and writing diary in a notebook behind bars, but the guard confiscated all his notes. It is also known that there is no correspondence between him and Pavel Sevjarynets by "prison mail". The young men must be kept in different buildings of the Investigative Ward. Alyaksey wrote three letters to his parents and wife, but none has reached the addressee.

Alyaksey's wife Ina Pimenava is afraid that she won't be permitted to visit him in the new place of confinement. They got married in the cathedral, but did not manage to register at the registry office.

Defenders Need to Be Defended in Belarus

In the middle of May, the Minsk Bar will review the question of attorney Vera Stramkouskaya's trading. As a result of this hearing, Stramkouskaya may be deprived of the right to practice on the territory of Belarus. The dissatisfaction with the attorney was formally caused by the personal statement with regard to her, made by judge A.F. Val'kovich, Moscow District Court of Minsk. V.Sramkouskaya thinks that the statement "is not based on the law and distorts real facts of the case".

April 30, 1998, attorney Stramkovskaya's motion to change the restraint of her client Andrey Klimau, Supreme Council Deputy, was heard in Moscow District Court. At the very beginning of the proceedings, the judge ordered the attorney of the fallen into disgrace Deputy to give a written undertaking not to divulge the investigation secrets. But attorney gave already such an undertaking to the investigator of A.Klimau's case on February 20 this year. The prosecutor affirmed that and showed the receipt of the undertaking, kept among other case papers. Further events developed in the following way. Meanwhile V.Stramkouskaya was far from refusing to give the undertaking not to divulge the secrets, but pointed out the existence of such an undertaking in the case, judge Val'kovich considered her words to be a rejection and ordered the attorney to leave the court-room. Thus the fate of A.Klimau (this Deputy and businessman has been kept in the investigative ward since February) was being determined in his attorney's absence.

According to the judge, his order to Stramkouskaya was conditioned by the ruling of the Supreme Court Plenum of the Republic of Belarus. But that document is the main circular only for judges and cannot oblige attorneys to follow it. The ruling contradicts art.141 of the Belarus Criminal Code, according to which an attorney must give a written undertaking to the investigator, but not to the court. As we can see, V.Stramkouskaya acted in concordance with the legislation. In case she divulged the secrets of her client's case, the attorney's responsibility is covered by the written undertaking of 20 February. V.Stramkouskaya also points out the principle of equity of the parties to the lawsuit. It's logical that in this very case the prosecution, it means — the prosecutor — should execute the condition, offered to the defender, too. Otherwise, the accused person's rights of defence and lawsuit ethics are broken.

During investigative procedures and in court, Vera Stramkouskaya appears for other members of Belarus opposition: M.Statkevich, Head of the Social-Democratic Party "Narodnaya Gramada", S.Martselau, a "Youth Front" leader, Z.Vas'kovich, a "Youth Front" member, 10 social-democrats and one BPF member, arrested after the march on 1 May, as well as V.Staravojtau, Chief of the joint-stock company "Rassvet". Attorneys' activity in political cases brings to the tension against them from the side of the authorities through the inferior bodies of justice. This process, initiated by President A.Lukashenka and his people, was legalised in June 1997. It prescribes all attorneys to join the Bars and share the information about all their clients with their officials, otherwise the Ministry of Justice has the right to abridge them of their licenses (it means of the right of occupation, if they do not follow Lukashenko and secret services in their conditions). During some recent months, the State has expunged from its lists a number of professionals. The precedents with well-known lawyers, honest rights-defenders Nadzeja Dudarava and Gary Paganjaila appeared to be the most celebrated. They continue working in international or foreign (the Moscow Bar) structures. However, the authorities do not allow them to act as attorneys. The aim is clear: above all things, to leave the citizens, persecuted for their struggle against the regime, without juridical assistance.

Jana ZHDANOVICH

13-Year-Old Prisoner

On 14 May, a 13-year-old schoolboy Raman Shkor was arrested while pasting up flysheets about the coming demonstration of protest and charity rock-concert in support of the political prisoners in the neighbourhood of President's Administration in Minsk. The teenager was detained by a member of Belarusan Patriotic Students' Union, who, having introduced himself and shown his certification, forcibly brought Raman Shkor to the Militia Point on Karl Marx Street. The teenager caught the name of the person that detained him. The BPSU member's name was Valery Vashkevich.

At the Militia Point, the militiamen confiscated all the flysheets, burned them in the trash basket, took fingerprints and mugged the teenager. During the examination the militiamen asked the boy where his parents work and whether they are interested in politics. In two hours, after the protocol was drown up, without a word said to the parents about the detention, the thirteen-year-old boy was let go.

Raman Shkor reckons that his civil and child's rights were violated with that arrest. The schoolboy made a statement to the Human Right centre "Spring-96".

On 18 May, V.Papusha, a teacher of school #4, where P.Shkor studies, announced to the teenager that if he continued to distribute flysheets of BPF, she would send him back to the place, from which he was let go, for long.

Adward TARLETSKY

If there are people, there are articles

The old principle of security officers does not work sometimes.

On 5 May, in spite of the pelting rain, people gathered at Jakub Kolas Square. Little by little there appeared more and more of them, and in some thirty minutes about two hundred citizens went along the sidewalks of Skaryna Avenue towards the Victory Square.

'Even skies cry for our boys,' elderly women were saying.

'At least there is fresh air to breathe with in the cell,' said one of Valadarka's recent prisoners.

The action in support of the young political prisoners was organised by "Youth Front" in Minsk. Its two members are being kept behind bars today. 19-year-old Alyaksey Shydlousky has been held in captivity for 9 months and now he is to be sent to a high-security colony. 21-year-old leader Pavel Sevjarynets has been under examination in prison for two months, and the investigators are still looking for something they could accuse him of.

In the rain, the participants of the action on May 5 were carrying banners with the demand to release Shydlousky and Sevjarynets. Some of the banners were painted in red over white cloth, and under the rain the colour began running like blood... Naturally, numerous secret service workers with videocameras did not notice that. Sometimes they were walking by, sometimes they hid behind poles (once a militiaman from the group of demonstration supervisors indignantly pushed "a video-amateur in civil" off from the column). Even militia began feeling sick and tired of the results of such recordings...

No incidents happened on the way to the opera house, on the stairs of which a small meeting was carried out. On the crossroads at the circus, several women with portraits of the prisoners in hand proposed to hold a meeting near the walls of "Valadarka". It was clear that thus they would not have avoided a conflict with secret service workers. So demonstrators decided not to provoke them.

'Those ones, who aim at putting slur on my brother's name, throw mud at themselves! — The youth leader's sister Ganna Sevjarynets said at the meeting. — People like Pavel will remain forever a symbol of Belarus' purity...' On behalf of her family, Ganna thanked all kind people for encouragement. By the way, together with the political prisoners' friends from "Youth Front", compassionate youth and representatives of social-democrats and United Civil Party took part in the action. There were quite a lot of elderly people.

After the meeting was closed, several elderly people got on with the action: they threw Lukashenka's portraits into the puddles under their feet and trampled them. Then accurately put the rubbish away.

Before the participants could go home, the "grab" began. Men in civil drove up in ordinary (with "civil license plates") cars to bus stops and groups of people going along the streets, and before the latter could say Jack Robinson, some of them found themselves on the way to a Militia Point. The unknown seized 10 people that night. One of them, Zmitser Marchuk, a member of Social Democratic Party, was seized in front of a German journalist, who was shocked by the sight and compared the actions of the Belarusan secret service with "Stasi" in East Germany. Among other apprehended there were Uladzimir Labkovich, Vadzim Kanapatsky, Yuras' Gubarevich, Sjarzhuk Shmjaljou, Viktar Zhagun'. During the capture, the latter tried to escape the people in civil, jumped onto the carriage-way and was knocked down by a car. Bleeding, with his head broken, V.Zhagun' was brought to the Militia Point and only then the emergency ambulance was called for. Perhaps, the militiamen and their brass got scared by the complaint that V.Zhagun' addressed to the Prosecutor's Office. In three hours all the apprehended were set free.



On the photo: the procession in defence of the political prisoners on the streets of Minsk.

Tattsyana SNITKO

Sad "Anniversary"

(Continued from page 1)

education in Belarus – all of them with no exception provide education in the Russian language...

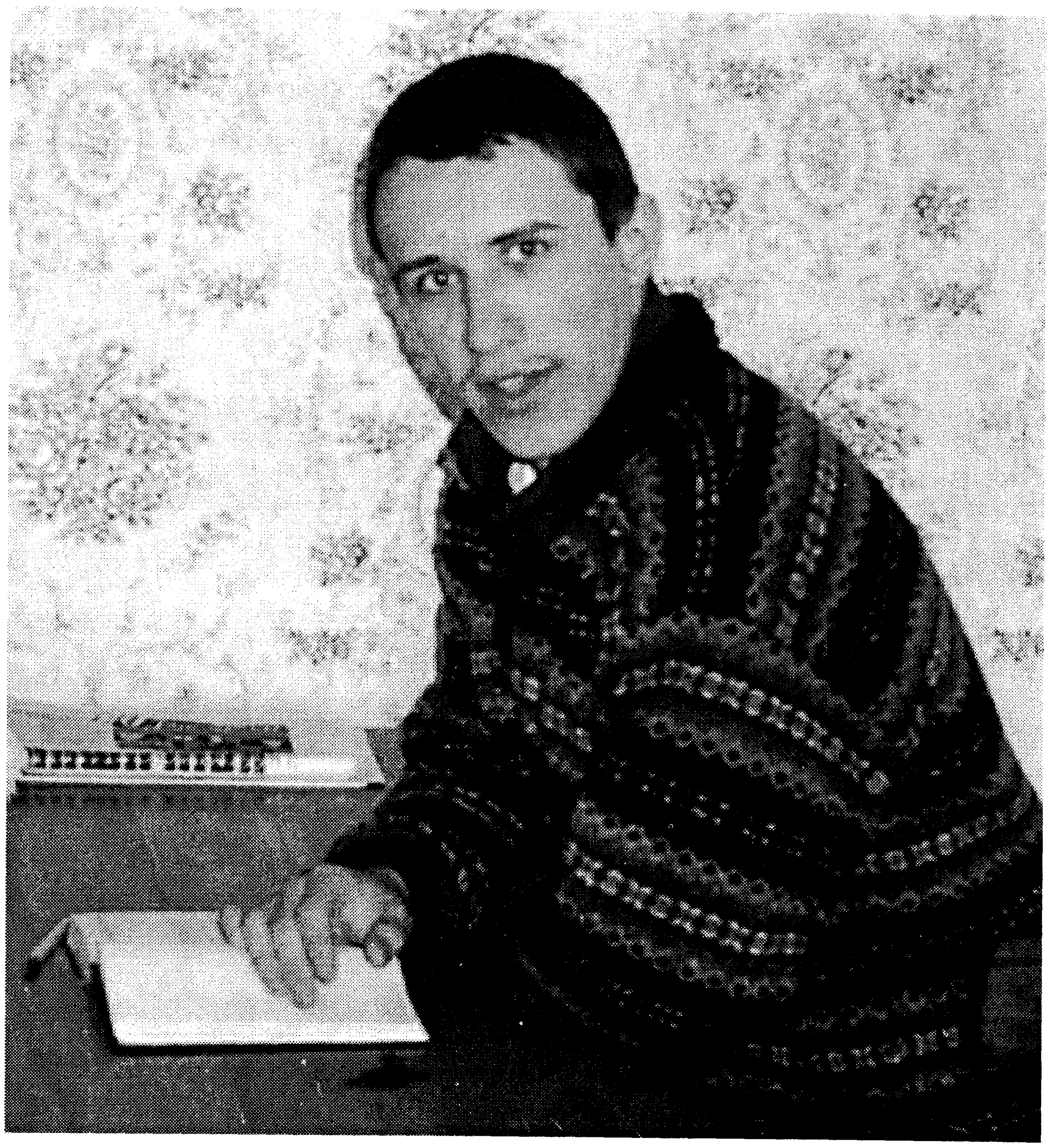
Thus one of the richest and most beautiful Slavonic languages (as Adam Mitskevich thought) is on the verge of disappearance. It is put across in the most cynical and Jesuitical way: as though the Belarusans themselves abandon their mother tongue. The whole nationality is being brought into derision in front of the world community. Meanwhile, population censuses and the referendum itself prove that at least from three to five million people (this number exceeds the population of some European countries) use the Belarusan language in everyday life and are not going to reject it. Not going, but... From time to time newspapers "gladden" them with reports like "There is no Belarusan-language school in the Soviet District of Minsk " or "There are no Belarusan-language pupils among first-graders in Orsha"... The number of Belarusan-language schools and kindergartens decreases catastrophically, there are no institutes of higher education, radio and TV are practically Russified, as well as the absolute majority of newspapers. Messages about people been beaten in broad daylight for speaking Belarusan (!) appear in print more and more often... All these facts demonstrate that the Belarusan language is being bereft of its perspective, that the language is being abolished according to a plan. And all this means that if European (and first of all Slavonic) nations do not pay attention to the discrimination character of the ethnolinguistic situation in Belarus today and do not help this way the three millions of Belarusans, that keep confronting the process of assimilation, in two or three generations the whole people may happen to disappear from the map of Europe...

Andrea NALIVA

Pavel Sevjarynets: "I Cannot Flee from My Motherland"...

Pavel Sevjarynets has been behind bars for more than a month. He is the only person from the apprehended on April 2, who is still not free.

Having unleashed a real war against Belarusan youth, the Belarus authorities consider the youth leaders extremely dangerous. That is why they are jumping at any reason to make short work of them. And the fact of choosing Pavel, one of the leaders of "Youth Front", for that reprisal speaks for itself. The regime itself acknowledges "Youth Front" as a centre of youth resistance movement.



Within 21 years of his life, Pavel Sevjarynets managed to finish a special school of arts with a golden medal, enter the College of Geography, BSU, and study there for some years till he was made to take an academical holiday in the spring of 1997. By that time he had become a noticeable person among Minsk youth, which sought changes in the society and took heavily the events of the latter years in Belarus.

In the summer of 1997 Pavel was elected a co-president of a new-born "Youth Front".

Addressing the organisation's first conference, the leader of the front youth told about the inadmissible nature of the most radical methods of struggling against dictatorship: according to his words, Minsk streets did not need "Palestinian variations". Young Belarusan patriots chose peaceful means to struggle, i.e. meetings and pickets, Belarusan dances and sport competitions... Soon many journalists and just observers admitted the following point of view: it was young people from "Youth Front" that filled the life of the Belarus opposition with youthful ardour and introduced new methods of manifesting the nation's insubordination. The regime itself proved that in course of time: the largest proportion of repression acts in Belarus since last summer comes precisely to the members of "Youth Front". They are being beaten, fined, sent to "Valadarka", sentenced to years in the high-security colony for writing on walls: "Long live Belarus!" But the youth does not capitulate. When in February of this year the authorities began the trial of two young patriots Alyaksey Shydlousky and Vadzim Labkovich, their friends took up a new slogan: "We laugh unless we are hurt!" Together with collecting signatures for the political prisoners' release, "Youth Front" struck the regime with laughter: it carried out an alternative Olympiad, which had a remarkable resonance...

> *...The largest proportion of repressive acts in Belarus since last summer comes precisely to the members of "Youth Front". They are being beaten, fined, sent to "Valadarka", sentenced to years in the high-security colony for writing on the wall: "Long live Belarus!"*

Evidently, that tendency to like for the Belarus patriots could not but seem "dangerous" to the authorities.

One more fact should be mentioned. Shortly before Pavel Sevjarynets was arrested, a non-governmental newspaper "Nasha Niva" placed a story on its pages. Its main character, a young man, realises that while he was busy with everyday business, dramatic events began happening in the country. The character understands that the fate of the country is being decided, and all his friends are somewhere at the forefront of the events. He hesitates whether to join them or not, but is afraid, marks time and because of that perishes in his own house from hands of brutal "limbs of the law".

Indeed, it must horrify the authorities, if a person that sees their crimes not only refuses to keep silence but also gathers youth around him...

When Pavel's mother and father returned from the vacations in the middle of April, they were still unaware of

the shock waiting for them. The son has been for half a month in prison! He is accused of a crime! At once another shock followed: their small grandson, the son of Pavel's sister, died. The boy was one year and three months old and suffered from congenital heart disease. He had not woken from anaesthesia, had not passed through the operation.

Kastus' Sevjarynets, Pavel's father, narrated that at first American doctors undertook to treat his small grandson. But then the "conflict" between our President and Soros Foundation took place, and, because of its account having been tied up, the latter failed to refund the child's travel costs to America. 'They took my grandson, — Kastus' Sevjarynets says, — and now they want to deprive me of my son...'

Pavel's grandfather is a medalled veteran of the Great Patriotic War. He devoted his youth to the struggle against Hitler's Nazism, which the Belarus President eulogises as a factor of German unity...

> *...How glad would all these Khrustchjovs-Kavaljovs-Zimovskys be, had Pavel gone into hiding or asked for political asylum abroad instead of going back to prison! "I cannot flee from my Motherland," the political prisoner said and returned into his cell in due time...*

Pavel Sevjarynets was released for three days so that he could be present at his nephew's funeral. The authorities "humanly felt sorry" for him and took his word that he would come back. Or maybe they checked him? Can you imagine for a moment, how glad would all these Khrustchjovs-Kavaljovs-Zimovskys be, had Pavel gone into hiding or asked for political asylum abroad instead of going back to prison! "I cannot flee from my Motherland," the political prisoner said categorically and returned into his cell in due time... In a couple of days, April 23, there was a meeting of Pavel with his relatives in the prison (those present will never forget that long room, separated with glass baffles). After Pavel's return, the conditions of his detention worsened considerably. If earlier, as it was stated in his interview, in the cell there were six people per the same number of plank beds, now more people are added, and the apprehended sleep by turns, in several shifts. Of course, it means squeeze, lack of fresh air, psychological conflicts between people within four walls. And diseases. During the three days at liberty, Pavel caught cold, and under the prison conditions it caused exacerbation of his chronicle illnesses (stomach and others). April 24 Pavel's relatives made a request to the medical department of the investigative ward to provide medical care for the political prisoner. In such organs not only prisoners but also the heads seem to have learned to distinguish "political prisoners" among others. We should consider the fact that the so-called doctors there sympathise with sick people in the cells at the same degree as the walls of those cells do. At least there are lots of examples of it.

The same day, April 24, Moscow District Court of Minsk rejected the petition of P.Sevjarynets's attorney to change the restraint in regard to his client.

So what does "the apparatus" incriminate to Pavel Sevjarynets? If we analyse the course of events, we'll find the only question: they do not know themselves. Sure they cannot accuse the guy of leading the youth organisation, writing articles or singing songs at Yakub Kolas Monument on April 2!..

At first the investigators leaped at article 186-3 of the Criminal Code on "participation in mass rallies", which was already tested in the fight against opposition. But it would be absurd, as there were no disorders at the "Integration Day" (till they were created by militiamen and nobody-knows-who in civil). Very quickly the accusations were requalified as "malignant disorderly conduct" as per article 201 part 2. P.Sevjarynets was announced to have broken a microphone at the concert, dedicated to the "day of all nations' unity". Besides, he was accused of taking part in the combustion of a Russian flag. The investigators considered the videotape, made by militiamen, to be the main source of evidence. But after April 2, many people were tried on administrative cases for "participating in an unauthorised procession", and very soon the contents of the tape was known to the interested people. As it could be seen during the trials, Pavel Sevjarynets really appeared at the militia videotape, but only a crazy person could call the things he was doing (standing, singing, speaking to people) as an offence. According to the rules of logic, the tape disappeared in the short run. As investigator Igor' Golubev said to Pavel's father, it just vanished into space. Since the time when Lukashenko won office, such things have happened and not once. As we remember, the tape about beating the opposition Deputies three years ago was first to disappear.

Instead of the former article 205, the secret service found new ones, and both of them from the part "Crime against the State" (part 6 of the Criminal Code). Article 71 deals with violation of national and racial equality. Its pinkertones were read from the newspaper "Maladzevy Vestnik" [Youth Messager], P.Sevjarynets being its editor.

"An appeal to depose or alter the Constitutional order of the Republic of Belarus" is another accusation they are going to incriminate to Sevjarynets. If in Belarus the disapproval of a person for his patriotism were not so real, that item would sound funny. I will explain why. First of all, article 67 in the former times was called simply "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". Thus we recur to the typically Soviet persecution of dissidents for "extra dangerous crimes against the State".

> *...Pavel Sevjarynets really appeared at the militia videotape, but only a crazy person could call the things he was doing an offence. According to the rules of logic, the tape disappeared in the short run...*

Perhaps, we should not even mention that such cases lie within the jurisdiction of KGB, not the Prosecutor's Office. Secondly, Lukashenka's Belarus has already tried to use this article. Those attempts, known to the author of these lines, regard the year of 1996. They wanted to incriminate "an appeal to unseat the government" to poet Slavamir Adamovich. On the eve of the November referendum and some time after it, KGB through the Prosecutor's Office tried to frighten in Minsk several independent journalists with the same article 67 (the author of this article was one of them). Then the case on some "appeals..." was opened and closed even twice on the directive of foreign organisations. The top term of punishment, provided by the article, amounts to 10 years in jail. The minimum one amounts to 3 years. Coming back to the case of Pavel Sevjarynets, I must point out, that the same terms may be given as per article 71. It is evident that the "Criminal Code reading" and bringing charges with more and more cruel terms are to enervate Pavel as well as all those people who knew him at liberty. No wonder that investigator Golubev, while explaining to the father of the political prisoner, why it was "impossible" to change the restraint, noted: Pavel keeps some facts, and they need some more names... During 4 days they were extorting the compromising facts about "Youth Front" and Sevjarynets particularly from 15-year-old Zmitser Vas'kovich. The investigation made him then "an accomplice" and initiated a case according to the same article as Pavel's.

The detention of the "Youth Front" leader did not push the youth away from active resistance. A procession and meeting on May 5 were announced to be the next action of support of Pavel Sevjarynets. Right away after that document was submitted to Minsk City Executive Committee, a declarant Vadzim Kanapatsky was seized right at the building and put under arrest for 10 days for participating in the action on April 2...

Tattsyana SNITKO

Another Sentence for "Graffiti"

Three Belarusan teenagers are sentenced to 1 year with a respite for 1 year for writing slogans on walls...

The whole world knows the names of two members of "Youth Front", Alyaksey Shydlousky and Vadzim Labkovich, who were sentenced only for writing political slogans on walls.

The Belarus authorities still see graffiti — one of the most widely spread means teenagers use for expressing their thoughts — as a crime.

On May 18, Minsk Central District Court was hearing the case of three guys, including one minor, who painted the walls of the houses in the centre of Minsk on the 28th of February. Two months ago, when former students of the Radioelectronics and Informatics University Ales' Mukhin and Andrey Ghilevich, and 17-year-old student of Belarusan Polytechnics Academy Pavel Murashka were going back from the concert of NRM, they decided to repeat the heroic deed of the members of "Youth Front", who had been sentenced before. In the yards near Kiev park, the young men wrote on the walls and on the construction fences slogans like "Long Live Belarus!", "Belarus to Europ*ass*, Lukashenko to...", and right after these slogans they drew the national flag.

Militia detained them late at night, when they were painting a bus stop in national colours.

Examinations at the District Interior Department lasted till morning. A criminal case was initiated in respect of two adults, who took part in this action, as per 3 articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus: article №201 "malignant disorderly conduct", article №96 "damaging of property" and article №205 "recruitment of a minor in criminal actions". A criminal case was initiated in regard to P. Murashka as per the first two articles.

Later the parents of the "criminals" compensated different organisations and City Communal Service for material losses. That means the sum (more than 4 mln roubles) given for repainting and "repair of damaged" walls.

Ales' Mukhin and his student-mate and colleague in the street creative work Andrey Ghilevich were expelled from Minsk State Radioelectronics University on March 28. By the way, Mr. Valadz'ko, the Acting Director at that time, who had become acquainted with the case, was the main initiator of that: he signed the corresponding order, and now, having received a grant, he is in the USA on a probation tour of duty.

The three convicted, let's say, artists were waiting for the trial, unlike their predecessors, in liberty. Though, as a well-informed source from the Central District Prosecutor's Office says, the investigating body insisted on the pre-trial detention of these young men. In spite of positive characteristics from different establishments, in spite of the conditions which could have milder the sentence, and also in spite of the convincing speeches of three attorneys and a public defender from "Viasna-96" Committee, the young men were found guilty. Judge Braghin sentenced three young guys, including the minor, to 1 year with a respite for 1 year.

The Court found two defendants innocent of recruitment in criminal actions of their under-age accomplice. The prosecution could not prove their guilt: medical expertise's conclusion was that that night the guys were sober. At the same time, Judge Braghin refused to give private ruling in connection with the illegal expulsion of A. Mukhin and A. Ghilevich from Radioelectronics University, and advised them to fight for their rights by themselves.

Andrey NALIBOK

Farce

On 12 May, the consideration of the "1 May" case on Mikola Statkevich, "Narodnaya Gramada" leader, who was detained, kept three days in jail and then accused of organising an unauthorised march, was continued in Central District Court in Minsk. During the trial on 4 May, an important document failed among the case materials, which could prove the social-democrats' participation in the demonstration, organised by Minsk City authorities. The document was found within 8 days, and although militiamen-investigators regarded it as compromising Statkevich, the latter was acquitted by judge A.Barysjonok. Thus Statkevich has not committed any unlawful action. So what for was he put under arrest for three days?

This case becomes more confusing for the authorities, since 10 participants of demonstration on 1 May have been charged with taking part in the celebration as per an administrative article (before that, they were beaten, detained and put to prison for three days). If there was no unauthorised march, why were the guys repressed? Perhaps, the regime servers have begun working "for future use": they seize people and wait till further wheels of the repression machine are put into operation.

Really, history repeats in farce. The other days, an American comedy about Gestapo was broadcast on TV. "Seize, shoot and interrogate each and all!" a strapped rank shouts on phone. And then he hears his colleague's question: "Maybe they should interrogate them first?"

In the Belarusan version, victims of the regime have spent "only" three days in jail. That is why they have a right to appeal against the unlawful actions of the "apparatus" workers in curia.

N.K.

Chronicle

(continued from page 1)

On 4 May, M.Valansevich, a resident of the town of Skidal', informed the newspaper "Pagonja" [The Chase], that representatives of school administration are visiting pupils at home and agitating their parents to write application to carry out education in Russian instead of Belarusan.

On 5 May, men in civil detained several people, among them Vadzim Kanapatsky, Uladzimir Labkovich, Sjarhey Shmjaljou, Zmitser Marchuk, after a march under the slogan "Freedom to Political Prisoners!" During the arrest, Viktar Zhagun' run into the carriage-way and was knocked down by a car. Bleeding V.Zhagun' was handcuffed, thrown into the militia car and brought to the Central District Interior Department. Only then the emergency ambulance was called for, and the young man was carried to hospital.

On 6 May, as the newspaper "Naviny" [News] informs, censors prohibited displaying of four photos at Belarus-Switzerland exhibition in the National Museum. Otherwise the exhibition would have been banned. Belarusan variant of the exhibition album was published with white spots at the place of those photos.

In May, a decree of President Lukashenka is developed, according to which all drugstores should be nationalised. This will inevitably affect people's capacity to buy medicaments and therefore their health.

"Choice" Makes Its Choice

Chronicles of a Resistance

(conion from volume 8)

July 27, at 18 p.m., a horseman holding a white-red-white flag rode into Lenin St, Vitsebsk central street, at its very beginning, close to the Victory Square. He rode down the street towards "The Forum", where "Slavjansky Bazar" took place several days before, freely crossed the crossroads of Zamkavaja and Lenin streets. Cars stopped to let the horseman by. The latter rode by the Square of Will and galloped up to the end of Lenin Street. At the former building of Yakub Kolas theatre on Lenin Square, he turned towards the Botanical Gardens and disappeared. The militia was so stroken dumb by suddenness and impudence of the action, that could do nothing about the horseman.

On July 29, the chastooshka singers were summoned to the Chygunachny District Court by judge Fjodarau. B.Khamaida went to the court alone and "got" three days under arrest. U.Pleshchanka has been picketing in defence of Khamaida for three days at "the blue house". The militia did not disturb him during the first day. The next day he was detained and brought to court to judge Fjodarau after the protocol had been drown up. The latter alleged being busy, and the case was referred to judge Laksenkova. The judge did not find any offence in the actions of the charged person that time. At the third day of arrest, B.Khamaida, who hunger-stroke a day before, was released ahead of time.

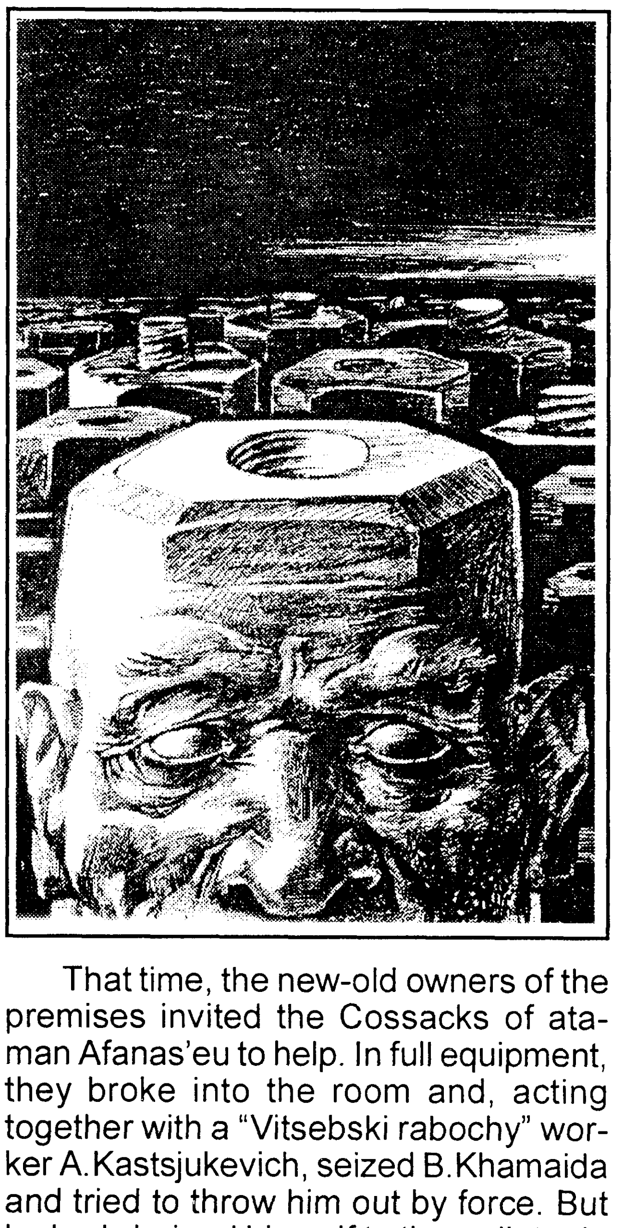
In September, the "Choice" members ran pickets and collected signatures in defence of the arrested journalists P.Sharamet and D.Zavadsky several times. Workers of the Chygunachny District Interior Department arrested the pickets thrice, on 15, 20, and 26 August. On August 15, judge Laksenkova closed the case of U.Pleshchanka, the case in regard to B.Khamaida was referred to Pershamaiski District Court for objective consideration. On October 13, Pershamaiski District Court "objectively" judged the case, and B.Khamaida was fined 30 million roubles.

The materials on apprehension on 20 and 26 August prove that pickets were absent from court in spite of the notice papers. On October 16, the newly-elected administrative judge of the October District Court Svetlana Tufan discharged B.Khamaida in absentia for the picket on August 20. Already on October 25, the same judge sentenced B.Khamaida to 10 days under arrest for a similar picket, in absentia, too.

On September 8, on the Square of Will, the "Choice" members organised a picket in honour of K.Astrozhsky's soldiers' victory on the Krapivinski field. The picket participants held information banners about that event and white-red-white flags. Approximately in half an hour workers of October District Interior Department dispelled the picket, detained Yuras' Karpau, Barys Khamaida and Uladzimir Pleshchanka, and brought them to the Militia Point, where a protocol on breaking President's Decree #5 was drown up. All the three people were set free after dark. Nobody appeared on summons to the October District Court.

On September 30, administrative judge of the October District Court Dudchanka sentenced each of them in absentia to 10 days of administrative arrest. But that decision has not been fulfilled till today.

At the end of September, the desk of the newspaper "Choice" was ejected from the premises it had occupied since October 1991. Oblast' Executive Committee provided the premises to the desk as a democratic newspaper instead of CPSU Oblast' Committee newspaper "Vitsebski rabochy" [Vitsebsk Worker]. The decision of the economic court to eject the newspaper "Choice" from those premises contravenes the legislation. The first attempt of ejection under the juridical writ failed at the beginning of September, as the desk refused to leave the room voluntarily, and workers of the newspaper "Vitsebski rabochy", who were to receive the room back, were afraid to use force against B.Khamaida. As for the militiaman, he did not porch in that business and kept still, watching. A new date of ejection was set for the executors.



That time, the new-old owners of the premises invited the Cossacks of ataman Afanas'eu to help. In full equipment, they broke into the room and, acting together with a "Vitsebski rabochy" worker A.Kastsjukevich, seized B.Khamaida and tried to throw him out by force. But he had chained himself to the radiator in advance. Yuras' Karpau started interceding for B.Khamaida. The Cossacks pushed him out. Vol'ga Kladava, who came to the editorial office with a one-year-old son, was not let in, too. A.Kastsjukevich rushed looking for a metal saw to saw the chain... The "ejection" lasted longer than an hour. The militiaman was watching in silence, as in the first time. The Cossacks sawed up the chain and carried B.Khamaida out from the room.

Daily during the autumn and beginning of the winter of 1998, pickets were placed at "the blue house" to distribute independent press. During that term, B.Khamaida was several times detained by workers of the Chygunachny District Interior Department and brought in court to judge S.Tufan. She did not see any violations in B.Khamaida's actions. But after Lukashenka's chamber altered art.167-1 of the Administrative Code of RB, she changed her attitudes and decided to punish severely all the "violators".

January 15, 1998 B.Khamaida was sentenced to 15 days under arrest for the banner "Belarus is our home, our temple, our Motherland".

On January 16, the militia did not disturb Uladzimir Pleshchanka for an information banner, which revealed the reason for B.Khamaida's sentence. B.Khamaida was not disturbed for the same banner "Belarus is our home, our temple, out Motherland" after several days the sentence was over, too. But on January 23, he and Yu.Maroz were detained and sentenced to 10 days in custody by the same S.Tufan.

U. Pleshchanka ran a protest picket during several days. Almost daily, militiamen brought him to the Militia Point, but judge S.Tufan rejected to consider the case after every detention. Still, when the time to release Yu.Maroz and B.Khamaida came, February 2 she sentenced U.Pleshchanka to 10 days under arrest.

Now protest pickets were run by Yu.Maroz and B.Khamaida. To everybody's surprise, judge S.Tufan did not bring B.Khamaida to account for pickets on February 10 and 11, but on February 11 fined Yu.Maroz 37,5 million roubles for the picket on February 10. As for the picket on February 11, she postponed hearing of the case in respect of Yu.Maroz on February 24. But at that time he was serving sentence in 15 days for the picket, carried out in Minsk during the trial of Shydlousky and Labkovich, and hearing of the case was delayed till March 11. That day Yu.Maroz was fined 37,5 million roubles once again.

So only moral support of Uladzimir Pleshchanka cost Yuras' Maroz a fine in 75 million roubles.

Such sentences lose any reality, however. In general, they are frightful only till the first sentencing decision... They do not and will not ever stop Vitsebsk regime-fighters.

From the Inside of the "VALADARKA"

Colony-4

There was less than a month left till the end of my jail term. The date of the release was Sunday, June 22. According to the law, if the day of release is a red-letter day, it is counted for the prisoner's benefit. I didn't really want to work, besides, the ad-ministration of the colony didn't insist on it. In the end of June there was the next "etap", and the administration of the colony tried first of all to provide work for new prisoners. To while away the time, we made "chif" (very strong tea) 3-4 times a day. But even this was not a way out. Days seemed too long. The only thing I could do and which is worth mentioning was reading.

One day I was cleaning my drawer, throwing away old press. A prisoner came up to me and asked politely: "Mister Mikola, could you give me the magazine "Krynitsa", please?"...

I was surprised. Firstly, my neighbours haven't been interested in this magazine before. Secondly, the prisoner was speaking good correct Belarusan. It was a 45-years-old man from the last "etap". His jail "pogonialo" (nickname) was Professor. Perhaps, he was given this "pogonialo" for his bald spot and glasses with thick lenses. He began looking through the magazine and stopped at pages with Natalia Arsenieva's verses and memoirs. "Very good poetess, we took her work for the classes of home-reading. But at that time I couldn't find her collections for my pupils", uttered Professor sadly. I said joking: "Is it necessary to appear behind bars to find Natalia Arsenieva's verses?" Professor remained silent for some time, but when he understood that I was ready to talk with him, he told me the story about his impri-sonment.

After graduating from Gomel University he worked as a teacher of Belarusan literature and language. After some time he became the Head of Studies in a village school. The Head of District Department of Education didn't like a young perspective teacher. It seemed to him, that the village Head of Studies was going to occupy his position. So he began to organise inspections of the school very often. During one of the inspections, they found something compromising the Head of St-dies. It "came out", that he registered more hours than he really worked and received more money. He was asked to get discharged due to his wish. He refused. The case was referred to the District Court, Professor (Vasily Vasilievich at that time) was sentenced to 2 years of correctional labour at his working place with paying off 15% of his salary to the State. Besides, he was fired. For 1 year, the teacher was looking for a job, but he didn't manage to find it. And in order to support himself and his mother (who was retired), he was working in his garden. He filed claims to different authorities every month. In a year he received a document, according to which he had to go to the Court. As a law-obeying citizen, Vasily put on a clean suit, a white shirt and went to Gomel. But he didn't return to his house. The term of sentence was changed for imprisonment due to non-payment of 15% of his salary to the state budget. From the Court he was taken to Gomel jail, and after 2 months — to the colony.

According to the teacher's words, two months of imprisonment seemed to him terrible hell. From another source I came to know that he was turned into a "horse" in jail. That means that he had to clean "khata" every day and to clean a tank with shit. (In Gomel jail there are no toilets and that's why the prisoners have to use tanks). In the colony he gave a sigh of relief. But soon he faced other difficulties. During five days he was rambling, doing nothing and hoped that he would be given something to do. The administration of the colony gave him 20,000 roubles on the day of his arrival, and he spent this money for food. He could afford to buy 2 loafs of rye bread and a pack of ground rice. His white shirt became dark grey long ago, and his suit looked shabby. I couldn't accept a teacher, who was unemployed even in the colony, into my "family", but I began supporting him (mostly with food) regularly. In about a week he got a job. But it was not a great advantage. The administration of the colony decided to use a basement of the barracks as a library, and appointed the former schoolteacher to the position of its Head. Here there were about 30,000 books, which had been given by other libraries. The Head of the colony gave an order to make up a catalogue. That was Vasily Vasilievich's duty.

Those, who get no "podogriev" (support) from outside, have to do everything to survive in the colony. Vasily Vasilievich also understood it after some time passed. Every evening he brought several books from the library, he exchanged them with prisoners for cigarettes, and the cigarettes were changed for food. I didn't pay attention to those deals. They seemed so natural here. At his free time Vasily Vasilievich continued filing claims to all the authorities; in those claims he was proving his innocence. There was no result.

The latest letter on 12 pages was addressed to President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.



Mikola KACHAN

(continuation to follow)

(continuation from volumes 2-3, 5-8)

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